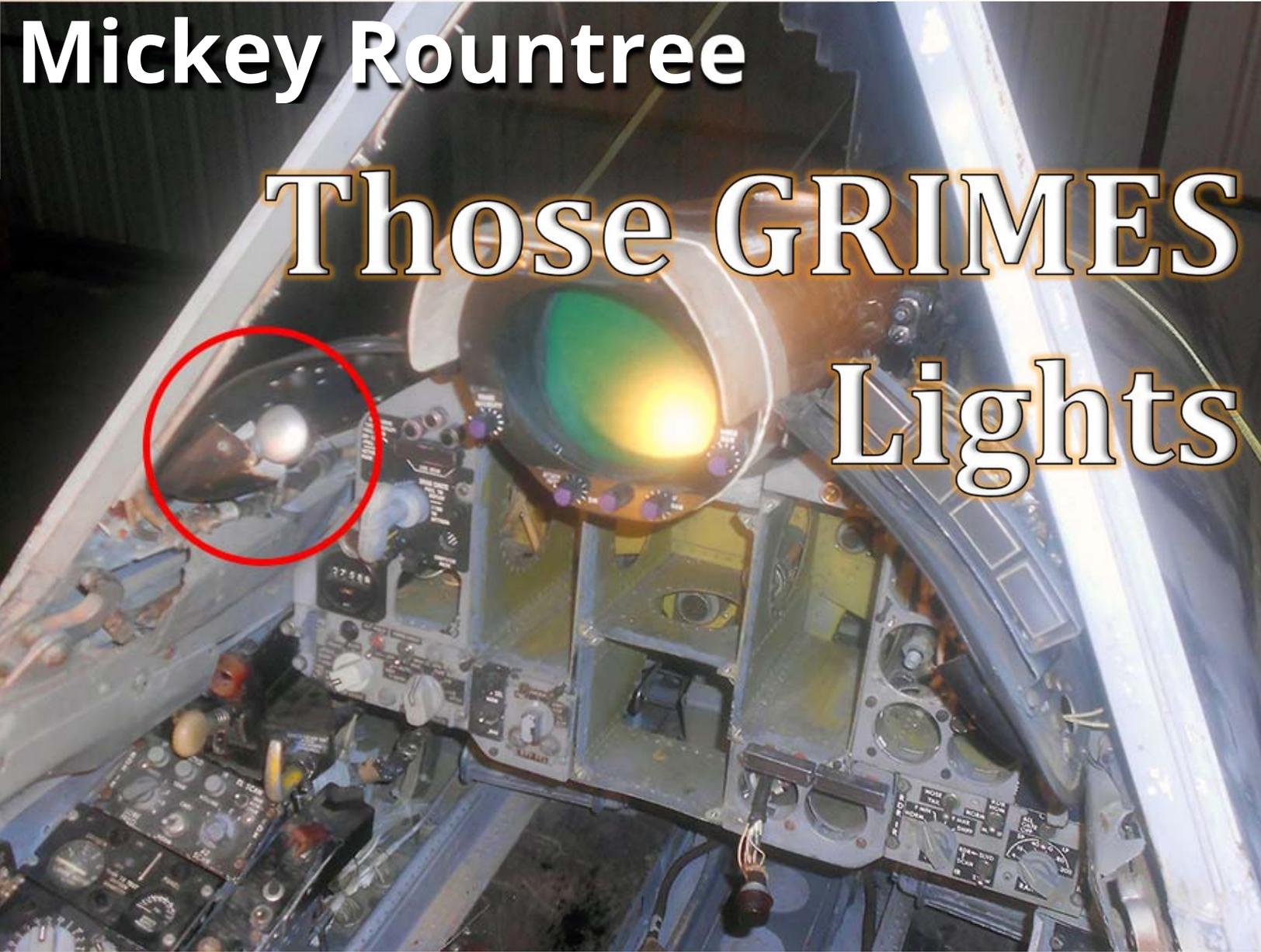


Mickey Rountree

Those GRIMES Lights



Those GRIMES Lights

Exposed “Thunderstorm Lights” Bulbs

By Michael E. (Mickey) Rountree, LtCol USAF (Ret)

“Flying at FL410, we just pressed in. Then BLAM! The jet jolted violently, and the cockpit filled with a blast of water. At about the same time, lightning opened up. When I tried to look back at the gauges, I could not see them! I couldn't see lead either”

This may be unique to me, but I'll never forget the “GRIMES” lights in the cockpit of the F-106. They were two lights, one on each side, probably attached to the canopy rail, that were bright and not dimmable and most importantly, attached to the battery bus. Although I have not been able to find them in copies of the Dash-1, I believe they were referred to as “Thunderstorm Lights”. Strangely, the bulbs appeared to be exposed (but it may have been a fixture). Either way, the part that faced the pilot said “GRIMES”.

That brings me to the “why” I remember, and now write about such an obscure feature, and this is where the stories begin, actually, two stories:

The first is actually just an addition to a bigger article/story that you can find as The Real Story of 509 on the [<https://f-106deltadart.com>] webpage. In that account I describe a point, after the “crash” when I was alone and trying to figure out my actual situation. With the wheels showing unsafe, I wanted to know how the hydraulics were doing, and those gauges were very small and dark. So, I grabbed the “GRIMES light” switch and boom, I could see that the pressures were good! The rest of the story, landing in the dark and all that, is in the other write-up.

My second Grimes story happened about a year later, on a cross-country weekend. We were a 3-ship heading to Homestead, having stopped at Kelly to “get gas and go pee”. It was night, and approaching the west coast of Florida, the thunderstorms below were obvious and dramatic. But flying at FL410, we just pressed in. Then BLAM! The airplane jolted violently, and the cockpit filled with a blast of water. (That’s right, over seven miles up, real water in the cockpit!) At about the same time, lightning opened up, and I guess it must have struck my jet. When I looked back at the gauges, I could not see them. I could no longer see lead either, and knew I needed to get clear. So, I pulled up and left, and reached for the “GRIMES switch”. It worked! Then in a few seconds, the regular electrical systems came back on line as well. The cockpit cleared, and I called for a separate clearance to get to Homestead. We all landed separately, then just met at the bar. However, before shutting down the engine, I did cycle through the electrical system, off then on, and it was normal. Code1 – good to go tomorrow!

I have received a number of interesting comments to my Facebook question - - and learned a lot about Warren Grimes and the WACO facility just north of me. My personal experience with GRIMES in the F-106, and the local history, are why I thought to put this article down.

Mickey Rountree, LtCol, USAF (Ret)

P.S. After those early experiences, I always trained, planned and rehearsed what to do when “the lights go out”. In both the F-4 and F-16 simulators, as well as academic situations as an instructor, I would take personal time to reach and touch the essential go-to-in-the-dark lighting system. And, I taught it to the students that came my way as well.